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## WHAT IS MEANING.....?

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Semantics, a branch of linguistics, deals with meaning in language. The study of meaning has been proved to be confusing and misleading one. Scholars have presented their views about the nature of meaning. However, confusion and inexplicitness continues to hamper the growth of the discipline. The present paper attempts to survey and highlight this aspect of the subject.

**KEYWORDS**: semantics, mind, context etc.



#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The study of meaning is known as Semantics. Semantics is one of the recently developed branches of linguistics. In a sense, it is partly developed and partly it still remains a matter of investigation. Most of the people concerned with meaning are confused due to its intricate nature. Scholar like C.K. Ogden and Bloomfield are also not sure about its nature. They either look forward in future for its development or exclude it from the study of language. Some of the scholars concerned with meaning prefer to collect different views rather than giving its exact definition. This research paper endeavors to present different points of view regarding the nature of meaning.

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT**

Those who assume psychological factor in the organization of meaning state that there is a close connection between meaning and mind. For them, meaning is an essentially mental phenomenon. Meaningis something which is connected to words through psychological associative bond that exists between them. Meaning is an image or idea that exists in the mind. It is expressed by word. According to this view, the role of language is to express the association between language and idea. Whether language expresses this connection or not is different issue. But the psychological connection is perceived.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECT**

Whether meaning is a social phenomenon is really interesting matter. When the western scholars like Ferdinand de Saussure and others claim that human language is arbitrary, it is established that the relationship between a word and its meaning is not logical. One can not explain as to why a word holds a particular meaning or vice-versa. So it is stated that the relationship between words and meaning is conventional. It is a matter of conventions set by social group. The members of the social group decide what semantic connections between words and meaning. It is observed that the members who fix the connection between words and meaning can not explain it logically. That is why, it said that human language is arbitrary. The societal groups either continue the previous practices or create their own practices of establishing semantic connections without satisfactory justification.

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## **CULTURAL ASPECT**

Language enjoys intimate connections with culture and its practices. The meaning of a particular word is sometimes determined by cultural patterns. Therefore, some semanticists say that the culture of a group should be considered or taken into account while knowing the semantic aspects of words.

### **SCIENTIFIC ASPECT**

According to Leonard Bloomfield, linguistics is a thoroughly scientific discipline and it was claimed that each linguistic element can scientifically be defined. Bloomfield was ambitious to give scientific explanation of each word to know its meaning. However, he could give scientific explanation of trees, plants, chemicals etc. but when he was confronted with the words like love, hate happiness etc. he was unable to define them scientifically. Finally, he concluded that since meaning is mental phenomenon and unobservable, it should be excluded from the study of language. It was clear that scientific explanation was enough to know the meaning of words. This is the limitation of the science. However, it is out of frustration that Bloomfield tried ti exclude semantics from linguistics.

#### LINGUISTIC ASPECT

Geoffrey Leech proposed the linguistic approach in his book entitled 'Semantics'. He is of the opinion that the problem of defining meaning can only be solved by limiting the scope of study of meaning within the linguistic framework and not by taking it outside the linguistic context. The main contention of Leech's views is that the problem of defining meaning aroused due its association with non-linguistic factors. Taking semantics outside linguistics is as vain as the search for the exit in a room which has no doors at all. So the problem is to be solved by linguistic means. Psychological, sociological and scientific factors are non-linguistic factors and they have nothing to do with defining meaning. In the linguistic approach to the study of meaning, Leech wants to recommend the observation of meaning relations at both the word and sentence level. In addition to it, the native speaker's linguistic competence and the knowledge of the world are essential things in the study of meaning under linguistic approach to the study of meaning.

#### **CONTEXTUAL ASPECT**

Pragmatists suggest the importance of the context in the study of meaning. The meaning of the words or sentences, they argue, depends on the interpretation of the context. Words or sentences refer to something and something is nothing but context. Unless the context is provided to language, one can not make out the meaning.

# **CONCLUSION**

This is how various aspects of meaning are discussed by the experts in the field of semantics. Despite this varied nature of the meaning, it has remained an enigma in the sense that no linguist is able to state the nature of meaning with full confirmation of facts surrounding the nature of meaning. Therefore, the nature of meaning has remained an illusion, trying to evade the authencity about it. So what is meaning is big question mark?

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